DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 522 IR 052 127

AUTHOR Rholes, Julia M.; Caldwell-Wood, Naomi
TITLE ERIC SilverPlatter: Is It User Friendly?
PUB DATE Jul 87
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Library Association (San Francisco, CA, June 27-July 2, 1987).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Computer Literacy; Education Majors; Evaluation Criteria; Higher Education; Indexes; *Intermode Differences; *Library Instruction; Library Surveys; *Online Searching; *Optical Disks; Reference Services; Use Studies
IDENTIFIERS Current Index to Journals in Education; *ERIC; Resources in Education; *SilverPlatter Information Inc; Texas A and M University; User Preferences

ABSTRACT

This study conducted at Texas A&M University compares two types of training approaches using ERIC SilverPlatter (ERIC SP). Education students received either: (1) a one hour training session on basic search commands and strategies, or (2) a four page instructional handout that described basic search commands, Boolean logic, and special features with examples. Both groups performed searches using the system and then completed evaluation forms that inquired about academic background, previous computer experience, library experience, and user reactions to ERIC SP. Data obtained from the 73 users who completed the survey indicated that, while many users will need assistance with ERIC SP, the classes are not essential for the successful implementation of an ERIC SP service. The six figures attached to this report include lists of user comments and selected search topics as well as copies of the user survey and the instructional handout. (RP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED286522

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Julia M. Rholes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ERIC SilverPlatter: Is It User Friendly ?

In December 1986, the Microtext Department of Sterling C. Evans Library at Texas A&M University began offering the ERIC SilverPlatter (SP) database on CD ROM (Compact Disk Read Only Memory). ERIC SP, which comes on three CD ROM's, covers both the printed tools Resources in Education (RIE) and Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE) for the time period 1966 to the present. ERIC SP includes quarterly updates.

This service was available to Library patrons at no charge seven days a week for approximately 80 hours a week. During the period February 12, 1987 through May 9, 1987, staff observed 591 ERIC searches. Monday, Wednesday and Fridays were the periods of heaviest use.

User surveys (Figure 1) were placed next to the ERIC workstations. The surveys include questions about academic background, previous computer experience and library experience. Users were also asked to evaluate ERIC SP. 73 users completed the survey. Results from this survey follow.

Characteristics of ERIC SP Users

Figure 2 and 3 note the distribution of users by department affiliation and academic classification. No special publicity was sent out during the survey period. Many users were either referred by Reference or by other ERIC users. Since the RIE indexes and ERIC microfiche are located in the Microtext Department, a number of users tried the service when they came to use these products. The majority of the survey respondents had used other library services before. 88% indicated that they had used the card catalog; 84% indicated that they had used the card catalog; 84% had used

IR052127

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Current Index to
Journals
in Education
CIJE
ERIC
Resources
in Education

All searchers should be strongly encouraged to use the thesaurus, and, if possible, the thesaurus should be placed with the workstation.

User Reactions to ERIC SP

Users were asked to rate several different aspects of the ERIC SP service. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating greatest satisfaction with the service, 38% of the respondents marked "5" and 39% marked "4". When asked to rank ease of use, 31% marked "4" and 50% marked "5". Related to the question of ease of use, 81% of the respondents indicated that ERIC SP was preferable to other searching methods. In comparing ERIC SP to specific printed indexes, users overwhelmingly found ERIC SP easier to use than RIE or CIJE printed indexes, Education Index Reader's Guide, and Magazine Index. 52% of the respondents cited the help screens as the feature that they most liked while 47% mentioned the printing options.

56% of the survey respondents, however, indicated that they experienced problems with ERIC SP. 30% had difficulty determining the proper subject terms while 22% indicated that they had difficulty in moving from one process to the next (e.g. FIND to SHOW). 47% noted problems with the HELP sheets or screens.

Response Time

Users rated response time for ERIC SP somewhat lower than ease of use. 38% gave response time a "5" while 39% marked "4" and 17% marked "3". During most of the survey period, only one workstation was available for ERIC searches. This workstation included an IBM PC XT. Later, a second workstation equipped with an IBM PC AT was added. The response time was considerably better with the PC AT.

the Microtext Department, and 47% had used printed indexes. As a group, the survey respondents indicated a relatively high level of computer literacy. (Figure 4) 77% had used a microcomputer; 71% had used a word processing package. A smaller percentage of our sample had used other online products in the Library. 34% had used BRS After Dark while 23% had used CD ROM products elsewhere in the Library. Interestingly, 54% had used ERIC SP before.

ERIC SP Searches

ERIC SP is useful for a wide variety of topics. Figure 4 lists examples of selected topics reported in this survey. The searching software of Eric SP, which is quite similar to BRS, is more powerful and difficult to learn than many CD ROM products, such as INFOTRAC, and the average ERIC SP search takes longer than other services. The majority (54%) of the searches took more than 20 minutes. (Figure 5) Only 16 % of the respondents reported searches of less than ten minutes. During the survey, no appointments were taken; libraries considering the option of appointments may want to schedule at least 30 minutes for ERIC SP searches.

The average search resulted in 19 citations. This figure does include a number of "no hits" searches and a search where the individual printed 200 citations. No limit was placed upon the number of printed citations during the survey period. A sign, however, cautioned users to print only the references that they needed.

85% of the respondents to the survey indicated that they were able to successfully complete their searches. Of the individuals who did not successfully complete their searches, 75% indicated that they had problems determining the proper subject headings. Two thirds of these individuals, however, reported that they did not use the ERIC Thesaurus.

Cancellation of Printed Indexes

While 98% of the respondents to the survey would like to keep ERIC SP as a permanent service, the reponse to question of cancelling the printed Eric indexes was not unamious. While 15% were strongly in favor and 14% were in favor, 36 % were strongly opposed, and 22% were undecided. In the comments sections, respondents mentioned the possible need for additional workstations and extended hours of service if the printed tools were no longer available. One user was concerned that he/she was not obtaining the most recent references.

Training for the ERIC SP User

Many users, particularly users unfamiliar with other online services, will need assistance with ERIC SP. All Microtext staff were familiar with ERIC SP search software, and staff were frequently asked to assist users of ERIC SP. Regarding user aids, a 45 page users manual comes with the ERIC SP subscription. Only 33% of the survey respondents actually used this manual. Of those who, did only 4% gave the manual a "5" for clarity. 75% gave the manual "3" or less. Since it is not easy to quickly look up items in this manual, staff prepared a four page handout which described basic search commands, Boolean logic and special features with examples (Figure 6). From staff observations, these HELP sheets seemed to be used more frequently than the longer manual. In additon, staff offered a one hour class on ERIC. This class was offered twice during the semester. Thirty people attended the classes which covered basic search commands and search strategies. The classes also include live demonstrations of ERIC SP. According to the evaluations collected at the end of these classes, those who attended found the classes quite helpful. Since only a limited number of individuals who

attended the classes completed the survey forms, it is not possible to comment on the impact of the classes on the outcome of ERIC searches. The large percentage of successful searches and the high satisfaction scores reported by respondents in the survey would seem to indicate that the classes are not essential for the successful implementation of the ERIC SP service.

Equipment

Initially, the Library had only the current ERIC CD ROM which covers 1983 through 1986. One workstation was dedicated completely to ERIC SP. This workstation consisted of an IBM PC XT, a Hitachi CD ROM player and a Hewlett Packard Thinkjet printer. In April, the Library received the backfile of ERIC SP which is on two CD ROM's. One disk covers 1966 to 1975 and one covers 1976 to 1982. A second workstation was added for ERIC SP when the backfile was received. The configuration for this workstation is an IBM PC AT, a Hitachi CD ROM player and an IBM Proprinter. Both workstations are housed in locking desks adjacent to the Microtext reference desk. (See Photo) Patrons and staff preferred using the IBM PC AT because the response time was quicker.

FIGURE 1

STERLING C. EVANS LIBRARY
MICROTEXT DEPARTMENT
USER SURVEY
ERIC SILVERPLATTER

Please aid us in evaluating the ERIC SilverPlatter System by completing this form. The tabulated results will aid in improving the content and service of the system.

Thank you for your cooperation.

DATE:_____TIME:_____

DEPARTMENT:_____CLASS:____Undergrad:_____Grad:

_____Fac/Staff:_____Other (please specify)_____

1. What Library Services have you used at Texas A&M? (Check as many as apply to you).

Printed Indexes (e.g ERIC, CIJE or Education Index)_____
ERIC Thesaurus_____
Subject Card Catalog_____
Microtext Department_____
Learning Resources Dept.(LRD)_____

Computerized Database searches:
BRS After Dark_____
AIRS_____
Wiley Laser Disc Service (in Reference) _____
Other (please specify)_____

2. Please check as many of the following statements that apply to you.

I have listened to compact disc._____
I have seen videodisc._____
I have use microfiche._____
I have used microfilm._____
I have used a microcomputer._____
I have used a mainframe computer._____
I have used a word processor._____
I have used a laser disc retrieval system._____
I own a microcomputer._____
I have used ERIC SilverPlatter before._____ If yes, how many times?_____

3. Describe briefly your search topic:_____

_____

PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS AFTER COMPLETING YOUR SEARCH

4. Did you successfully complete you search using ERIC SilverPlatter?_____Yes_____No

5. How many citations did you print from ERIC SilverPlatter?
_____citations

6. How many citation were relevant to your topic?_____

7. Approximately how many minutes did it take to complete your search?_____less than 5;_____5-10; _____10-15;_____15-20;
_____more than 20

8. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest, rate the clarity of the users manual.

Lowest clarity			Highest clarity		Did not use
1	2	3	4	5	_____

9. Rate from 1-5 your satisfaction with ERIC SilverPlatter response time:

Lowest				Highest
1	2	3	4	5

10. Rate from 1-5 the ease of use of ERIC SilverPlatter:

Lowest				Highest
1	2	3	4	5

11. What feature of ERIC SilverPlatter did you like the most?
Help Screens_____ Printing options_____
Other_____

12. What problems did you experience with ERIC SilverPlatter. (Check as many as apply)

What problems did you experience with ERIC SilverPlatter?
Difficulty with Help Screens, Help Sheet _____
Difficulty with moving from one process to the next (e.g FIND to SHOW)_____
Difficulty in determining proper subject terms_____
Other problems_____

13. Do you think ERIC SilverPlatter was preferable to other searching methods you have used, or might use for your topic?
_____yes_____no

14. If you have used any of the following sources how would you compare ERIC SilverPlatter's ease of use with that of the other sources?

	ERIC SilverPlatter Much Easier to use	ERIC SilverPlatter About the same	ERIC SilverPlatter Harder to use
ERIC Index	_____	_____	_____
CIJE Index	_____	_____	_____
Education Index	_____	_____	_____
Reader's Guide	_____	_____	_____
Magazine Index	_____	_____	_____

15. Would you like to see ERIC SilverPlatter as a permanent service?_____yes_____no

16. If the Library had to cancel subscriptions to the printed ERIC, CIJE, and Education Indexes to keep ERIC SilverPlatter, how would you feel?

Strongly in favor_____ Strongly opposed_____
In favor_____ Undecided_____

17. Have you attended the class "ERIC on CD-ROM: How To Use It"?
_____yes_____no

18. Do you think you were better able to search as a result of attending the class?
_____yes_____no_____undecided

19. Please make any comments or suggestions you may have.

FIGURE 2

Data from "Academic Classification"

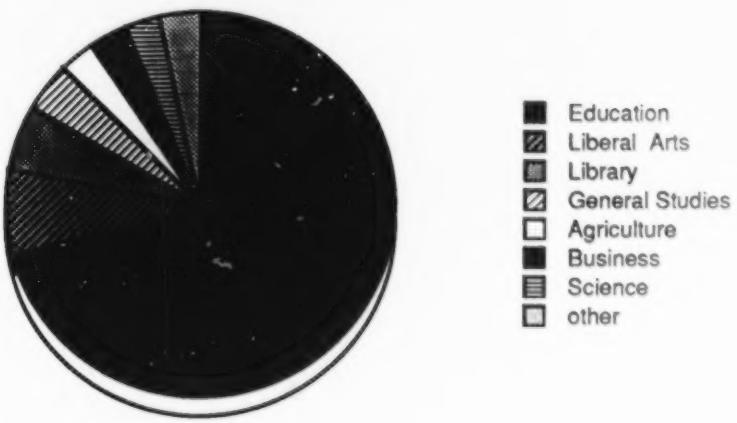


FIGURE 3

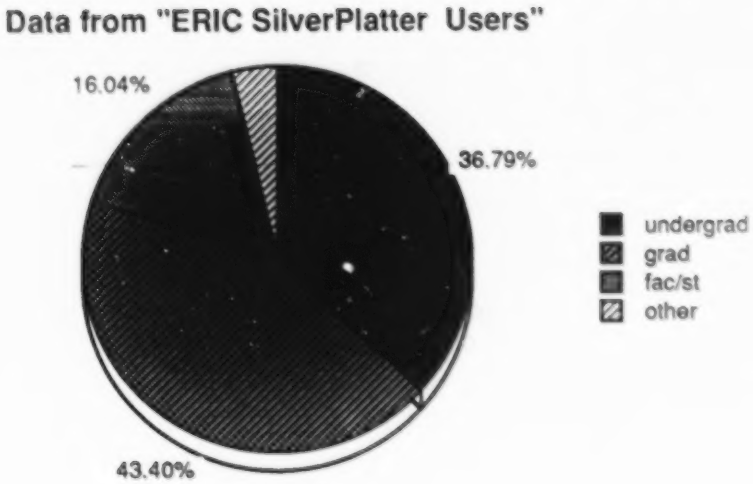
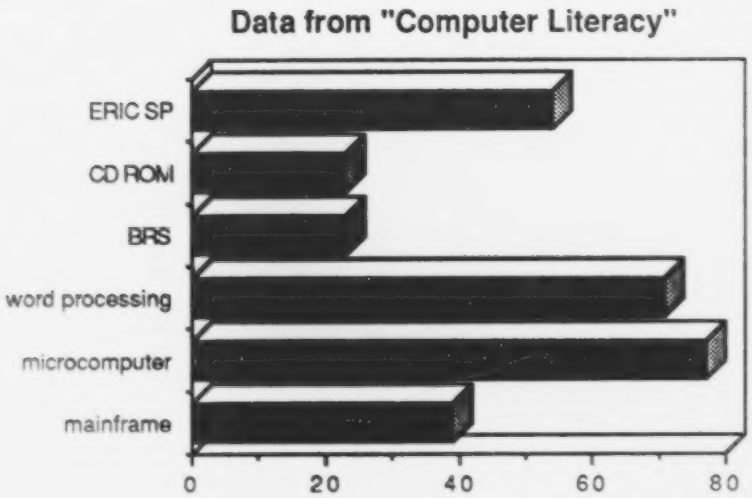

Data from "ERIC SilverPlatter Users"
16.04%
36.79%
43.40%
undergrad
grad
fac/st
other

FIGURE 4


Data from "Computer Literacy"
ERIC SP
CD ROM
BRS
word processing
microcomputer
mainframe
0
20
40
60
80

User Comments

Great system - faster than online.

Maybe have scheduled appointments.

I wish the psychology database was accessible.

I was pleased that it was here for me to use.

It made my search quite a bit easier.

Faculty extremely helpful!

Need a more exact users' guide and clearer help messages.

This is a great system.

I hope more units will be added as demand increases.

I spent 8 hours using CIJE on my topic and I used ERIC SP for 30 minutes and ended up with even more articles.

I ran out of time to properly use and evaluate the system - will do so in the future.

It seems you would have to have more terminal and printers if you had no printed material. Also, it is interesting to see what is being written when I am looking in the printed index for my topic. However, I personally, will use ERIC SP again and again and again to find reference sources.

I may be a misunderstanding, but it seems to light on it's coverage of journals. Also, the dates of the articles are 2-3 years old. I need to use a the hard copies for recent articles.

I hate the printed ERIC. Godsend.

Helpscreens would be better if condensed.

I liked combining descriptors to get pertinent information on subject I wanted.

Selected ERIC SilverPlatter Search Topics

attitudes of principals toward mainstreaming

education of illegal aliens in Texas

advantages and disadvantages of an MBA degree

alternative press

recruitment on college campus

storytelling for mentally retarded children

cerebral dominance and reading

federal regulations in higher education

English as a second language

computer-assisted instruction with reading

drugs in sports

bilingualism - failure of schools

movitation techniques in the classroom

FIGURE 5

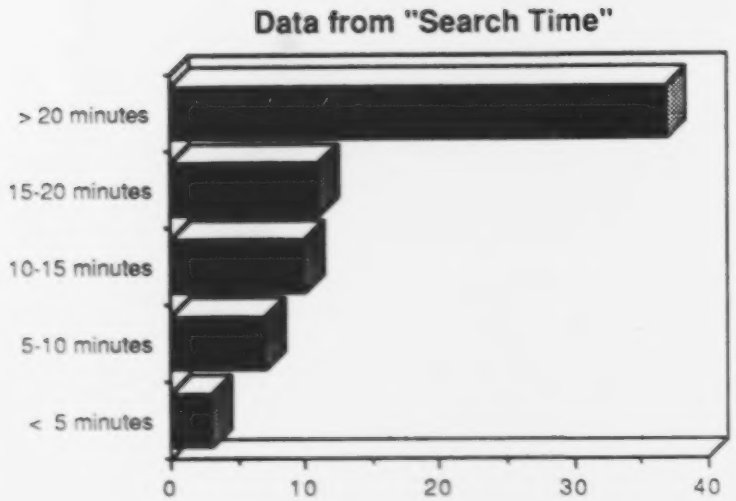

Data from "Search Time"
> 20 minutes
15-20 minutes
10-15 minutes
5-10 minutes
< 5 minutes
0
10
20
30
40

FIGURE 6

ERIC SILVERPLATTER
HELP SHEET

What is it?

The ERIC (Eduction Resources Information Center) database consists of Resources in Education (RIE) file of document citations and Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE) file of journal article citations from more than 750 professional journals. The dates covered are displayed on each screen.

Who can use it?

ERIC SilverPlatter may be used by anyone with a valid Texas A&M University ID.

When can I use it?

ERIC SilverPlatter will be available in the Microtext Department during the following times:

Monday - Thursday 8:00AM - 10:00PM
Friday 8:00AM - 5:00PM
Saturday 9:00AM - 6:00PM (Limited Assistance)
Sunday 12:00PM - 10:00PM

How much does it cost?

This service is provided free of charge.

For more information contact the Microtext Department at 845-1952.

How do I use it?

For best results, it is recommended that you use the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors to determine the appropriate subject terms before beginning you search. The thesaurus is located on the index table next to the workstation. A space has been provided below for listing the subject terms which seem most appropriate. One is not, however, limited to the terms in the thesaurus. Once you are ready to begin your search, you may wish to review the help screens which explain the system by pushing the **[F1]** key on the keyboard. A summary of all the ERIC SilverPlatter function keys and the search operators is listed on the reverse side of this sheet.

List Search Terms Here

FUNCTION KEYS

[F1] HELP	Learn about the system or one of its functions
[F2] FIND	Search for words or phrases in the database
[F3] GUIDE	Learn about the database
[F4] SHOW	Displays retrieved records
[F5] INDEX	An alphabetical list of words and hyphenated phrases indexed in the database
[F6] PRINT	Print retrieved records
[F7] RESTART	Begins or ends a session
[F8] XCHANGE	Change compact disc (for backfiles inquire at service desk)
[F9] PREVIOUS	SHOW previous records (may also use [PgDn]
[F10] NEXT	SHOW next record (may also use [PgUp]
[ESC] [c] CLEAR	Erase search from search history (press [ENTER] to erase entire search or type number of last search requested you want to erase and press [ENTER])
[ESC] [o] OPTIONS	Modify [FIND], [SHOW] and [PRINT]
[ESC] [t] TRANSFER	Downloads retrieved records to floppy disk (see Microtext Staff for details)
[ESC] [q] QUIT]	Begins or ends a session
[BACKSPACE]	Erases typing errors
TAB	Moves between settings on [SHOW], [PRINT]
[BREAK]	Use with [CTRL] to cancel a command

LIMITING THE SEARCH

#1 and #2

Only records containing both #1 and #2 will be retrieved. #1 and #2 can appear any field. The system will automatically assume **and** unless you specify otherwise.

#1 or #2

Records containing #1 will be retrieved
Records containing #2 will be retrieved
Records containing #1 and #2 will be retrieved

#1 not #2

Among all the records containing #1, only those records which do not contain #2 will be retrieved.

(#1 and #2) not #3

Records which contain #1 as well as #2, but which do not contain #3 will be retrieved.

#1 with #2

with retrieves records in which two (or or more) terms appear in the same field. e.g. drug **with** abuse retrieves all records that contain both words in a single field

#1 near #2

near is used to find records where #1 and #2 are contained in the same field
By adding a number to near you can specify how close the terms should be.
e.g. language near2 computer retrieves records within 2 words of each other in a sentence

#1 in field name

Use the operator **in** to search for a term in a particular field. e.g. Lassie "in" ti to locate titles including the term Lassie

BROADENING THE SEARCH

[*] Use [*] to retrieve all words beginning with the same roots, e.g. dog* will retrieve dogs, doggies or dogma. The [*] can be combined with any other operators, e.g. dog* not dogma

An efficient way to broaden a search is to use a hyphenated root as a search request, e.g. drug-* retrieves records that include drug-abuse, drug-dependence etc. Consult **[INDEX]** for a list of hyphenated terms.

ERIC SILVERPLATTER HELP SHEET

If you have questions which this sheet does not answer please ask the Microtext staff for assistance or refer to the ERIC Silver-Platter's user manual.

RESTART (F7)

To begin a search session

FIND (F2)

To look for:

A word.....dyslexia
A word phrase.....empty nest
A descriptor.....self-esteem
A major descriptor...self-esteem in dem
An author.....Ellis-Albert
A number.....1066
A word root.....adolescen*
A search statement...#2

Descriptors (subject headings) are
listed in the ERIC Thesaurus

To combine concepts

Use "and" to narrow search
EX: creativity and meditation
Includes both terms

Use "or" to broaden search
EX: wellness or health
Includes either term

Use "not" to exclude
EX: anorexia not bulimia

To limit a search:

By language.....English in LA
By doc type.....dtn=131
By pub date.....1984 in PY
To EJ or ED.....ed in fi

By selected fields:
EX: suicide in TI

SHOW (F4)

To display on screen:

FIELDS: ALL
Displays complete record
To display selected fields type
over ALL
EX: FIELDS: TI, DE

RECORDS: ALL
Displays all records
To display selected records
press TAB key & type over
ALL
EX: RECORDS: 1,4,7

PRINT (F6)

To print on paper:

FIELDS: CITN
Prints bibliographic fields
To print entire citn and abstract
type ALL over CITN
To print selected fields type
over CITN
EX: FIELDS: TI, AB

RECORDS: ALL
Prints all records
To print selected records press
TAB key & type over ALL
EX: RECORDS: 1-15
or RECORDS: 1,6,14

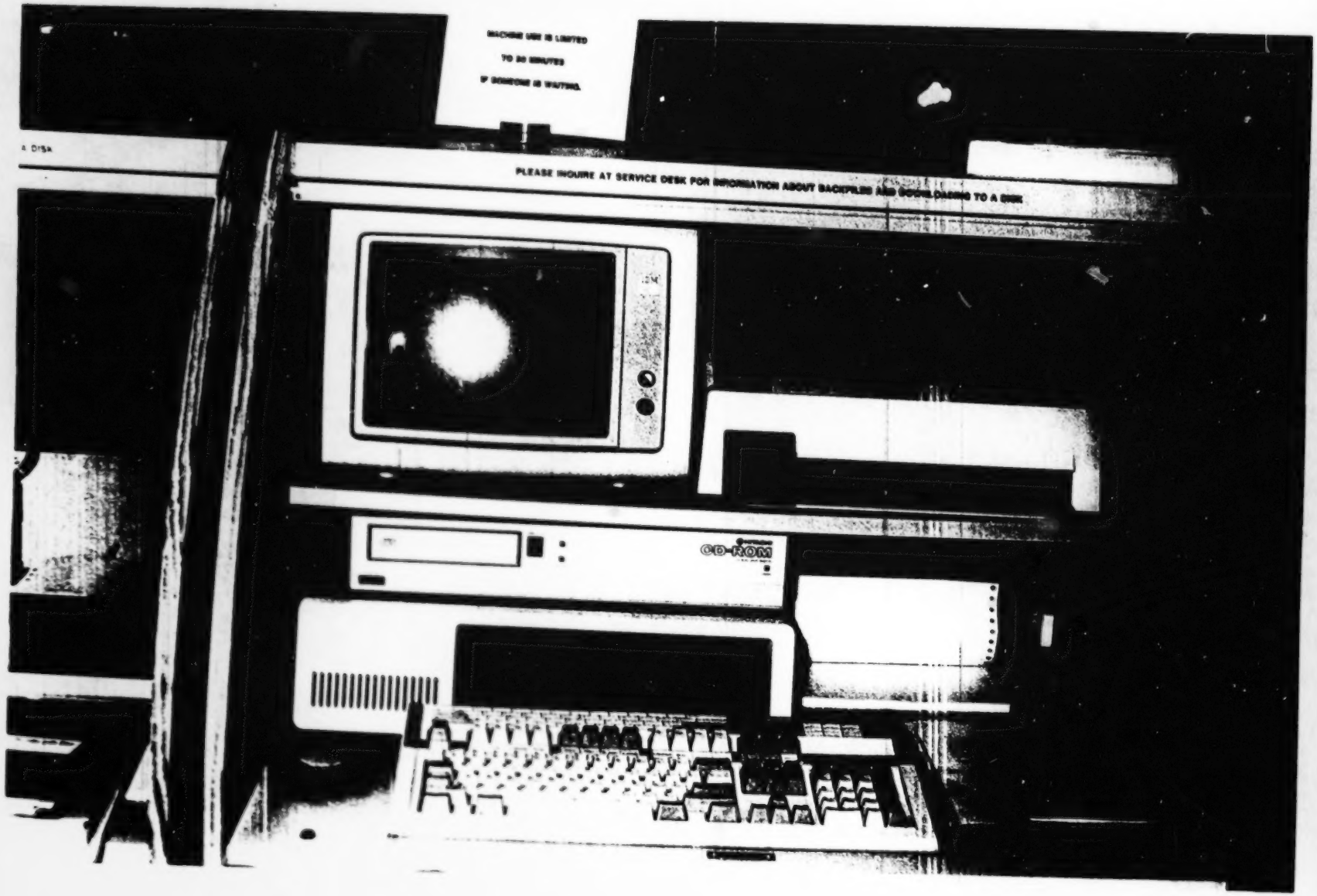
INDEX (F5)
To browse for author names,
journals, & subject words
EX: INDEX WORD TO LOOK
UP: Ellis

HELP (F1)

To learn about system

GUIDE (F3)

To learn about ERIC SilverPlatter


TO 30 MINUTES
PLEASE INQUIRE AT SERVICE DESK FOR INFORMATION ABOUT BACKFILING
CD-ROM